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# Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth: United Nations system coordination and collaboration related to youth

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted in accordance with resolution 47/1 of the Commission for Social Development. It describes the mechanisms for coordination and collaboration of relevant United Nations entities in their work related to youth. The report highlights examples of effective United Nations system collaboration on youth at the global, regional and country levels and discusses steps to further strengthen coordination among relevant United Nations entities.

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# I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 47/1,[1] the Commission for Social Development requested the Secretary-General to provide to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, through the Commission for Social Development at its forty-ninth session, a comprehensive report on the coordination and collaboration of relevant United Nations entities in their work related to youth.

2. The present report, which responds to this request, is itself an example of inter-agency collaboration. It is based on inputs received from the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. The report highlights selected examples of effective collaboration on youth at the global, regional and country levels and briefly discusses steps to further increase coordination among relevant United Nations entities. While the scope of this report precludes an exhaustive list of inter-agency activities, particularly at the country level, the examples chosen emphasize the range of ongoing inter-agency activities and highlight the success factors for effective collaboration.

3. The next section of the report begins with an overview of prominent examples of coordination and collaboration taking place within the United Nations system at the global level, starting with the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development. Successful instances of institutionalized inter-agency collaboration are also highlighted in this section of the report, along with other forms of collaboration between United Nations entities, civil society organizations and other relevant partners. The third section reports on coordination and collaboration at the regional level and presents information on activities that have been undertaken at the country level. Policy recommendations are provided in the concluding part of the report.

# II. Coordination and collaboration at the global level

## A. United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development

4. The United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development is the main mechanism of cooperation on matters related to youth development within the United Nations system. The Network consists of United Nations entities whose work is relevant to youth. Formal terms of reference for the Network were drawn up and adopted in early 2010 at a meeting of 17 United Nations entities working in the field of youth. The terms of reference define the purpose and objectives of the Network and outline its methods of operation and the parameters of its membership.

5. The aim of the Network is to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations work in youth development at the global, regional and country levels. This is achieved by strengthening collaboration and exchange among all relevant United Nations entities, while respecting and harnessing the benefits of their individual strengths and unique approaches and mandates.

6. The Network also contributes to increasing the understanding and visibility of the United Nations system's work on youth development through joint advocacy

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2009, Supplement No. 6* (E/2009/26-E/CN.5/2009/9), chap. I, sect. D.

initiatives. It also facilitates and supports youth participation within the United Nations system, through its programmes and initiatives, at all levels.

7. The Network has two co-chairs. The permanent co-chair is the United Nations Programme on Youth of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat. The second co-chair is selected by the members and rotates on an annual basis. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) served as the co-chair for period March 2010-February 2011.

8. The Network holds regular meetings at United Nations Headquarters, with telephone/video conferencing to other duty stations. A face-to-face meeting of the entities' representatives is held on an annual basis and, whenever possible, in the context of another youth-related meeting. Experts and organizations, in particular youth-led and youth-focused organizations and networks, whose knowledge may contribute to the Network's activities, may be invited to its meetings by the co-chairs, after consultation with other members of the Network.

9. In early 2010, the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development developed the United Nations Framework Approach for the International Year of Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding in order to guide collective efforts during the Year. The United Nations system's approach for the Year focuses on three key areas: (a) increasing commitment and investment in youth; (b) increasing youth participation and partnerships; (c) increasing intercultural understanding among youth. Moreover, members of the Network have developed a series of fact sheets on key issues of relevance to youth for the International Year.[2]

10. The Inter-Agency Network also organized the global launch of the Year on 12 August 2010 at United Nations Headquarters. The launch celebrated young people's contribution to development and peace. On that occasion, the principals of 28 entities of the Network issued a joint statement emphasizing their willingness to work together to tackle the multifaceted challenges facing young people. In addition to the global launch event, several entities organized joint launch activities together with regional United Nations information centres in their respective duty stations.

11. In the lead-up to the world youth conference called for by the General Assembly as the highlight of the Youth, the Inter-agency Network is organizing a series of briefings on major issues of relevance to the theme of the Year, to be held at United Nations Headquarters.

12. A number of future joint activities are also planned for the Network, including a report on youth civic engagement, a joint follow-up mechanism of key youth events, a global database of national youth policies and the identification and development of relevant youth indicators.

13. Other proposals for future collaboration include increased interregional sharing of data and exchange of good practices and relevant youth development experiences. Greater technical cooperation with Governments as well as research in areas such as emerging youth subcultures, changes in political participation of young generations and new patterns of inclusion and communication have also been suggested.

[2] http://social.un.org/youthyear/launch.html#fact

14. In support of the activities of the Inter-Agency Network, the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (EC-ESA) established, in September 2010, a working group of its social development cluster to develop joint research initiatives focused on youth development.[3] The working group is tasked with: (a) initiating a stocktaking of youth-focused research, programmes and activities across the United Nations system; (b) developing a long-term research strategy on youth development; and preparing guidelines on how to engage youth.

## B. Other institutionalized inter-agency collaboration

15. In some cases, inter-agency collaboration has been institutionalized through the creation of specific long-term structures to serve as official secretariats to facilitate such collaboration. Two examples of such institutionalized inter-agency collaboration in the area of youth are the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Youth Employment Network (YEN).

### UNAIDS

16. Empowering young people to protect themselves from HIV is a priority of UNAIDS. In particular, UNAIDS seeks a 30 per cent reduction in new HIV infections among young people (15- to 24-year-olds) by 2015 through the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive information, skills, services and commodities, in a safe and supportive environment tailored to the specific country and epidemic context. In order to achieve this goal, UNAIDS aims to increase young people's comprehensive knowledge of HIV, use of condoms and use of HIV testing and counselling services. Within the overall collaborative framework of UNAIDS, a number of inter-agency task teams, such as the task team on HIV and young people and the task team on education, promote further inter-agency collaboration related to youth.

17. The inter-agency task team on HIV and young people was created in 2001 to support an accelerated, harmonized and expanded global, regional and country-level response to the need to increase young people's utilization of HIV services. Membership includes the UNAIDS Secretariat and co-sponsors, along with youth networks/associations, donors, civil society, and research institutions. It is convened by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) as a lead agency on HIV and young people, as agreed in the UNAIDS technical division of labour.

18. The task team on education was created in 2002 to promote accelerated and improved education-sector responses to HIV and to support global and country-level actions. Membership includes the UNAIDS co-sponsors, bilateral agencies, private foundations and civil society partners supporting education-sector responses to HIV. It is convened by UNESCO, as the lead agency on HIV and young people in educational institutions.

19. Over the years, inter-agency task teams have produced many guidelines and tools aimed at supporting and strengthening the implementation of HIV programmes for young people. A recent output of the task team on HIV and young people includes detailed research on good practices in ongoing coordination and joint

[3] EC-ESA aims to foster coherence and common approaches among United Nations entities engaged in normative, analytical and technical work in the economic and social field.

programming on HIV and young people. The research highlights the need for, and the benefits of, coordination and joint programming on HIV and young people at the country level through case studies of good practices.[4]

**Youth Employment Network**

20. The Youth Employment Network (YEN) is another example of an institutionalized inter-agency cooperation mechanism on youth. YEN is a partnership between the United Nations, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank, set up in the wake of the Millennium Summit of the United Nations to find new and durable solutions to the youth employment challenge. The Network is a global platform whose goal is to prioritize youth employment on the development agenda and to exchange knowledge on effective policies and programmes to improve employment opportunities for youth. It focuses on policy advice, innovative pilot projects, knowledge-sharing and brokering partnerships. YEN makes use of its core agency partners' know-how and resources and ensures youth participation in delivering its services. YEN is managed by a permanent secretariat hosted by ILO offices in Geneva, Dakar and Dar es Salaam.

21. One of the key initiatives of YEN is its lead country network, composed of policymakers from 19 countries who have committed to prioritizing youth employment on their national policy agenda and have agreed to work towards meeting targets on youth employment. Other main activities include: the Youth-to-Youth Fund, which supports youth-led employment-generation projects; the YEN evaluation clinics, which provide technical and financial support to policymakers and practitioners to help them conduct rigorous evaluations of their youth employment programmes and policies; and the so-called Marketplace, an online space for the global youth employment community to exchange or offer innovative ideas, good practices, expertise and advice.

## C. Other forms of inter-agency collaboration at the global level

22. Below are a few examples of the many inter-agency task forces or working groups which address the priority areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

**United Nations Adolescent Girls Task Force**

23. In November 2007, the United Nations Adolescent Girls Task Force was convened in response to the need for a clear inter-agency programming framework specifically addressing the most marginalized and disadvantaged adolescent girls. The objective of the Task Force is to support the United Nations system in ensuring that programmes of cooperation with Governments and civil society raise awareness of the situation of the most marginalized and disadvantaged adolescent girls and prescribe practical action to fulfil their rights. Co-chaired by UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Task Force includes UNESCO, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the World Health Organization

[4] See UNFPA, UNAIDS and BBC World Service Trust (2010), Good Practice in Joint Programmes and Ongoing Coordination on HIV and Young People: 15 Nominated Programmes as well as UNFPA, UNAIDS and BBC World Service Trust (2010), Good Practice in Joint Programmes and Ongoing Coordination on HIV and Young People: Three Selected Good Practice Programmes.

(WHO) and ILO and supports collaboration at the country level with Government ministries, civil society organizations and women's and girls' networks.

24. In 2010, at the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Adolescent Girls Task Force launched the United Nations Joint Statement on Adolescent Girls, in which the heads of all six participating agencies pledged to intensify their efforts to fulfil the human rights of adolescent girls with a particular emphasis on those hardest to reach. The Joint Statement identifies five strategic areas: education, health, prevention of violence, leadership development and data. A joint programming framework to roll out the work in these five areas at country level is currently under development.

**Inter-agency cooperation on climate change and sustainable development**

25. The United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth, and Climate Change was created in October 2008 under the auspices of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The aim of the Initiative is to share information among interested United Nations agencies on their activities engaging children and youth on climate change issues at the national, regional and global levels. The Initiative also allows participating agencies to share plans for events on child and youth issues that are to be organized at meetings of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention and to facilitate a coordinated United Nations effort to that effect.

26. In this context, the Joint Framework Initiative implemented a series of activities at recent sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP). It also published *Growing Together in a Changing Climate: The United Nations, Young People, and Climate Change*, which contains information on some of the many climate change initiatives — projects, campaigns, educational tools, websites and publications — produced by the United Nations and young people. Moreover, it coordinated the publication of the brochure "Youth participation in the UNFCCC negotiation process", which aims to inform Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and young people on mechanisms for youth participation at the sessions of COP.

27. The increased interest in youth and climate change has also led to other forms of cooperation among United Nations entities. In the lead-up to COP 15 in Copenhagen in December 2009, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) organized the Tunza International Children and Youth Conference on Climate Change in Daejeon, Republic of Korea, which was attended by 800 children and youth. The Conference was supported by UNICEF, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNESCO and the UNFCCC secretariat and led to a youth statement on the Copenhagen process.[5]

28. In cooperation with other United Nations entities, notably WHO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), UNEP also organized regional seminars and workshops in all regions of the world to engage young people and their networks on climate change- and biodiversity-related issues. UNEP has also taken advantage of an online platform developed by UNICEF which allows children and youth globally to interact and

[5] www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=article_s&id_article=1570.

have online discussions on topics of importance to them, including environmental issues. The engagement of young people to commemorate major United Nations environment days, such as World Environment Day (5 June) and the International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May), also relies heavily on the UNICEF social networking platform.[6]

29. Through the youthXchange programme, UNEP and UNESCO engage young people all over the world by providing information on ways of adopting sustainable consumption habits and practices, as well as with awareness-raising campaigns, communication and education. The programme reaches out to youth through a network of diverse partners including non-governmental organizations, youth groups, education centres, schools and public institutions and is present in 45 countries in all regions of the world. A special youthXchange programme guidebook on climate change is also being developed with the objective of inspiring young people to take action and address climate change through sustainable lifestyle choices.

30. FAO and the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, in collaboration with the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, have published an educational package on biodiversity. It includes a comprehensive youth guide covering all aspects of biodiversity and current global biodiversity challenges, and a biodiversity challenge badge that encourages young people to learn about and to take practical actions supporting biodiversity in their communities.

### Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies

31. The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies was founded in 2000 with the aim of improving inter-agency communication and collaboration in the provisions of education opportunities and services in emergency and post-crisis contexts.[7] The current steering group is composed of UNESCO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF and the World Bank in equal partnership with CARE International, ChildFund International, the International Rescue Committee, International Save the Children Alliance, Open Society Institute and Refugee Education Trust.

### Task Force for the Protection of Children in Tourism

32. The Task Force for the Protection of Children in Tourism is an open-ended network with multi-stakeholder participation, including the United Nations World Tourism Organization, ILO and UNICEF.[8] The Task Force is focused on the prevention of all forms of exploitation of children and adolescents in the tourism sector, such as sexual exploitation, child labour and trafficking. The Task Force meetings, held annually at international travel and tourism fairs, serve as a platform for both the public and private tourism sectors, including civil society and the media, to exchange experiences and best practices, promote the adoption of professional codes of conduct and responsible practices, in line with the World Tourism Organization Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, as well as to disseminate awareness-raising materials and capacity-building tools.

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[6] www.unicef.org/videoaudio/video_50646.html.

[7] www.ineesite.org/.

[8] www.unwto.org/protect_children/index.php?op=0.

33. The Task Force promotes and supports an international campaign with the slogan "Don't let child abuse travel" which was launched in November 2008.

# III. Coordination and collaboration at the regional level

34. The following section presents the work of the United Nations from a regional perspective, focusing on Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia/Arab States. It describes existing regional mechanisms that are in place to facilitate coordination and coherence in the work of the United Nations and highlights a number of country projects, activities and partnerships.

## A. Africa

### Collaboration at the regional level

35. In Africa, as in other regions, the Regional Coordination Mechanism provides the overall framework for enhancing policy coherence and creating synergy and efficiency in the work of the United Nations at the regional and subregional levels. In May 2010, an education and youth sub-cluster was launched under the social and human development cluster of the Regional Coordination Mechanism. Its aim is to provide a platform for the coordination of United Nations support to the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programme, particularly in the areas of education and youth development.

36. The education and youth sub-cluster is convened by UNESCO and supported by ECA, as secretariat of the social and human development cluster. The sub-cluster's mandate is to provide programmatic, technical and institutional support to the African Union and its New Partnership for Africa's Development programmes in the area of education and youth, including the implementation of the Second Decade of Education for Africa Plan of Action and the ratification and implementation of the African Union Youth Charter by member States.

37. The education and youth sub-cluster has contributed to the establishment of the African Youth Volunteer Corps programme, led by UNFPA in partnership with ILO, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), ECA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNESCO and the United Nations Volunteers programme. The African Youth Volunteer Corps programme aims at youth development through exchange of knowledge and experience among African youth in the various countries. It also aims to offer employment opportunities and instil a culture of public service in African youth.

38. The education and youth sub-cluster will extend its support to the planning, organization and evaluation of the future sessions of both the Conference of Ministers of Education of the African Union and the Conference of Ministers of Youth of the African Union. The sub-cluster will also work to facilitate the coordination and harmonization of the work of African institutions of higher education and will solicit support for the establishment of the Pan African University as well as a pan African youth institute. In addition, the sub-cluster aims at developing strategic partnerships with development organizations outside the United Nations that are active in the area of education.

### Collaboration at the country level

39. A number of inter-agency programmes and projects implemented at the national level focus on promoting employment opportunities for youth. An example of one such activity is the Multi-stakeholder Programme for Productive and Decent Work for Youth in the Mano River Union countries, jointly developed by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, ILO, YEN and UNDP. It complements the Regional Programme for Social Cohesion and Employment Policies in West Africa developed by UNDP. The underlying principle of the partnership is to tap into each agency's expertise and maximize synergies stemming from inter-agency cooperation.

40. The programme focuses on three key lines of action: (a) the promotion of self-employment and entrepreneurship among youth; (b) enhancing employability of young people; and (c) supporting expansion of existing youth-led employment-generating activities.

41. As a spin-off of the initial phase of the Mano River Union Multi-stakeholder Programme, UNIDO, together with UNICEF and YEN, have launched a nationwide programme in Guinea to develop youth-driven businesses, primarily in the area of waste management. The first year of the programme is funded from the Peacebuilding Fund. The programme aims at engaging over 10,000 young people, with special attention being paid to disadvantaged youth. It focuses on access to direct funding opportunities for youth social entrepreneurship, and coaching and training schemes. It is supported by an information technology-based communications platform so as to enhance youth participation and information sharing among all stakeholders.

## B. Asia and the Pacific

### Collaboration at the regional level

42. The United Nations Asia-Pacific Inter-agency Group on Youth, chaired by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, serves as the coordinating platform for youth-related matters in the United Nations system in the region. The Group comprises the United Nations and associated entities that undertake programmes of relevance to young people in the region, including FAO, ILO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF. The Group was formally established in 2010 to support the principles of Delivering as One.

43. The Inter-agency Group's terms of reference include supporting the regional implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, the Millennium Development Goals (as they pertain to youth) and other youth-relevant internationally agreed development goals. The Group is set to prepare a compilation of youth policies ranging from poverty alleviation to employment, health care and education and to develop a framework for sharing and disseminating information on innovative and good practices and lessons learned. The Group is planning a regional meeting involving youth organizations and other stakeholders in early 2011 to help coherently plan United Nations programmes related to youth.

**Collaboration at the country level**

44. In several countries in the Asia and Pacific region, United Nations specialized agencies have actively collaborated on youth issues. Programme coordinating groups have been established to allow agencies to collaborate on technical interventions, while thematic working groups have been created to enable cooperation on specific target group interventions.

45. Programme coordinating groups are often chaired by the country representative of one of the resident United Nations entities working on youth issues. Collaboration between funds, programmes and specialized agencies has been effective in the formulation of national youth strategies and in the implementation of national youth policies, as well as in the establishment of youth advisory panels and the organization of national youth conferences. It has ensured greater youth participation and inputs to United Nations programme design, planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and has contributed to developing mechanisms for enhanced dialogue and information exchange between Governments, United Nations agencies, youth organizations and youth groups.

46. Examples of inter-agency collaboration in the area of youth can be found in a variety of countries in the region. For instance, in Mongolia, UNFPA, WHO, UNICEF and UNDP have been supporting the development of youth-friendly health centres. In Myanmar and Timor-Leste, UNFPA and UNICEF have been active in the development of youth-friendly information, education and communication materials on HIV/AIDS and adolescent sexual and reproductive health. In Nepal, the United Nations Country Team participated in a series of national advocacy forums and conducted an audit of the United Nations resident entities' understanding of and responsiveness to youth issues. In Pakistan, ILO, UNESCO and UNFPA have been working together with the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Labour and Education and young people in formulating concrete recommendations for developing a national implementation plan for youth development.

## C. Europe

47. The number of youth-related country projects in Europe and in other developed countries is limited. However, two projects, in Albania and Serbia, are worth highlighting. In Albania, the Youth Migration, Reaping the Benefit and Mitigating the Risks programme is being implemented by ILO, IOM, UNDP and UNICEF, together with four different Government entities and public-private partnerships. Its goal is to improve decent work opportunities for youth and migration management through a revision of national strategies on youth, employment and migration.

48. In Serbia, the same four United Nations entities mentioned above carry out a project entitled Support to National Efforts for the Promotion of Youth Employment and Management of Migration, in collaboration with seven governmental entities. The project aims at supporting national and local institutions in their efforts to increase youth employment, including among young Roma who have returned to the country. Both projects are implemented with financial support from the MDG Achievement Fund.

49. The country-level work is operated through joint programmes on youth, employment and migration. Currently, there are 14 such programmes being implemented with the support of United Nations country teams in Africa (the Sudan and Tunisia), Asia (China and the Philippines), South-East Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey) and Latin America (Costa Rica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Paraguay and Peru). They involve partnerships at both country and local levels.

## D. Latin America and the Caribbean

### United Nations Development Group working group on youth

50. The Regional United Nations Development Group Team for Latin America and the Caribbean recently established a working group on youth as a follow-up to the World Youth Conference held in Léon, Guanajuato, Mexico in August 2010 and the regional pre-Conference for the Americas, held in Bahia, Brazil in May 2010. The working group is currently developing its terms of reference and programme of work.

### Ibero-American cooperation system

51. Several entities of the United Nations system, including ECLAC, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNFPA, have joined forces with the Secretariat to develop a multidisciplinary research agenda on youth. Other stakeholders include the European Commission, the German technical cooperation agency GTZ and the Ibero-American Youth Organization. A major outcome of this joint effort was the publication of a report on youth and social cohesion on the occasion of the Eighteenth Ibero-American Summit held in El Salvador in 2008.[9]

52. Data collection and research have also been conducted on various youth-related topics including adolescent pregnancy and motherhood and indigenous youth. A system of disaggregated indicators has been created to monitor the social and economic situation of youth in all countries of the region which are published online and accessible to all stakeholders.[10]

### Inter-agency project on best practices in youth policies and programmes

53. The Best Practices project, coordinated by UNESCO and the Inter-American Development Bank, was supported by seven United Nations agencies and five intergovernmental organizations, with a total of 24 partners. The first phase of the project was devoted to preparing a review of best practices in youth policies and programmes in the region. The selection was reviewed at a high-level regional forum in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico in 2009 which brought together policymakers, researchers, young experts and representatives of international organizations and non-governmental organizations from the region. The outcome of the project, which consists of a selection of best practices and policy recommendations, is in the process of being published by the Inter-American Development Bank and UNESCO. The success of the project has generated interest from United Nations partners who are exploring ways of carrying out a similar project at the global level.

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[9] *Juventud y cohesión social en Iberoamérica: Un modelo para armar*.

[10] This system of indicators can be found at http://sicj.cepal.org and www.iberostat.org.

**Collaboration at a country level**

54. In Costa Rica, a joint programme entitled Youth, Employment and Migration: a One-Stop Shop for Youth Employment was established in 2008 with the support of UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP IOM, ILO, FAO and more than 20 national entities from Government agencies, the business and labour sector as well as civil society and youth organizations. The aim of the programme is to address youth unemployment, particularly among the most vulnerable groups, and to improve youth entrepreneurship and business opportunities for young people.

55. In Paraguay, UNICEF, ILO, UNIFEM, UNFPA and UNDP cooperate with 12 different governmental entities on a project entitled "Youth: economic capacities and opportunities for social inclusion". The project aims at increasing the skills and employment opportunities of young people in poverty through entrepreneurship, technical and employment training as well as through the provision of information to young migrant workers. The project also aims at generating greater respect for labour standards. In addition, the project has contributed to the creation of the Observatorio Nacional de Juventud (National Observatory for Young People).

## E. Western Asia/Arab States

56. Collaboration between the Regional Director's Team and the United Nations Development Group Arab States/Middle East and North Africa Region culminated in the formulation of the regional Inter-Agency Strategic Action Plan on Young People for 2010 and 2011 to guide the United Nations entities' work on youth in the Arab region.

57. The Action Plan identifies six aspects of young people's development as key technical areas of intervention: health, education, protection, participation, employment and decent work, and emergencies. For each of these areas, concrete objectives and activities as well as lead agencies have been identified.

**Example of collaboration at the country level**

58. In Tunisia, IOM, UNDP, FAO, ILO and UNIDO, alongside governmental and non-governmental entities at the national and local levels are working together on the programme Engaging Tunisian Youth to Achieve the MDGs. The programme aims to create decent jobs for both skilled and unskilled young people.

# IV. Benefits and challenges of inter-agency collaboration and lessons learned

## A. Benefits of inter-agency collaboration

59. The experience of inter-agency collaboration on youth at the global, regional and country levels has demonstrated a number of important benefits. The coordinating mechanisms and working groups that have been established at various levels provide a forum to share information and knowledge, avoid duplication of initiatives and identify complementary expertise and potentials for synergies in delivering relevant outcomes. Sharing of contacts and pooling of networks and expertise has proven to be especially helpful. In particular, organizations with only a

global or regional headquarters have been able to benefit from the country networks of partner agencies. At the same time, the agencies themselves have benefited from improved access to intergovernmental processes that take place at the global or regional level.

60. Since the challenges facing young people are multifaceted, sectoral approaches are insufficient to improve the well-being of young people in a holistic manner. By combining efforts, United Nations entities are able to draw on their specific expertise, mandates and resources to ensure that youth issues are addressed in a comprehensive manner.

## B. Challenges

61. Inter-agency collaboration on youth has not been without its challenges. Members of the United Nations system have different mandates and missions which do not always complement each other. United Nations organizations also operate with different financial mechanisms and procedures and have, for the most part, limited financial and human resources to allocate to coordination.

62. With the exception of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region, no joint workplan has, to date, been adopted by the various inter-agency mechanisms. Rather, entities have focused on implementing their own workplans and have participated in inter-agency activities that were in line with previously existing, agency-specific workplans.

63. Programmes and projects involving a limited number of United Nations entities, especially at a country level, have been more successful than those involving a large number of partners. Evidence has shown that having a programme coordinator and a joint programme unit made up of all partners is conducive to joint programming.

# V. Conclusions and recommendations

64. Collaboration within the United Nations system on youth-related matters has expanded significantly in recent years. This increased collaboration has resulted in the adoption of more strategic approaches to promoting youth development and, increasingly, joint programme delivery by the United Nations system. Yet, to fully reap the benefits of inter-agency coordination, more remains to be done.

65. **In view of the foregoing, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:**

(a) **To call upon the relevant organizations of the United Nations system to further increase coordination and collaboration in their work related to youth;**

(b) **To call upon the regional coordination mechanisms of the United Nations to adopt and/or implement regional inter-agency action plans in support of Member States' efforts to develop holistic and integrated youth policies based on the World Programme of Action;**

(c) **To call upon relevant organizations of the United Nations system to further develop inclusive and accessible mechanisms for youth participation in inter-agency initiatives on youth development.**

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# Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond

## Report of the Secretary-General

*Summary*

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 64/133 of 18 December 2009. The report is divided into four sections. Section II highlights the issues addressed by the above-mentioned resolution, including confronting family poverty; promoting intergenerational solidarity; reconciling work and family life; and collecting national and regional data on family well-being. Section III focuses on the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. The report briefly reviews human rights instruments and outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits as they relate to the family, it examines their relevance and importance for maintaining focus on the family, and it identifies the issues in need of renewed attention and action to guide preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. Section III also offers suggestions on the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family at the international, regional and national levels. The last section puts forward conclusions and recommendations.

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# Contents

| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| I. | Introduction | 3 |
| II. | Follow-up to the International Year of the Family | 5 |
| | A. Confronting family poverty | 5 |
| | B. Promoting intergenerational solidarity | 7 |
| | C. Reconciling work and family life | 9 |
| | D. Collecting national and regional data on family well-being | 10 |
| III. | Preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family | 11 |
| | A. Review of family-related provisions of human rights instruments and outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits | 11 |
| | B. Proposed framework for the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family | 15 |
| | C. Preparations at the international level | 16 |
| | D. Preparations at the regional level | 17 |
| | E. Preparations at the national level | 18 |
| IV. | Conclusions and recommendations | 18 |

# I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 64/133 on Follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond, requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its sixty-sixth session, through the Commission for Social Development at its forty-ninth session and the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the above-mentioned resolution and on the appropriate ways and means to observe the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, in 2014.

2. The unanimous proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the Family was in recognition of the importance families play in social development. Focusing on families offered a comprehensive, people-centred perspective on development issues that are routinely approached from a sectoral policy or social group point of view. The theme of the International Year: "Family: resources and responsibilities in a changing world" called attention to both the rights and responsibilities of family members and the economic and social processes affecting those rights and responsibilities.

3. As basic and essential building blocks of societies, families have a crucial role in social development. They bear the primary responsibility for the education and socialization of children as well as instilling values of citizenship and belonging in the society. Families provide material and non-material care and support to its members, from children to older persons or those suffering from illness, sheltering them from hardship to the maximum possible extent.

4. The social protection function performed by families is especially important in times of increased uncertainty and vulnerability. Families find it more and more difficult, however, to fulfil these multiple roles and tackle all responsibilities entrusted, either traditionally or by default, to them. As extended family networks get smaller owing to changes in living arrangements and family size, families struggle to fulfil their mutual obligations towards all family members, young and old. Furthermore, rapid socio-economic transformations, often combined with the eroding capacity of the State to protect households from their negative impacts through social policy interventions, leave a large number of families poor and vulnerable.

5. Over the years, the international community has recognized both the importance of families for the achievement of development goals and the challenges families face and the assistance they need to overcome them. The objectives of the International Year of the Family have helped to provide overall guidance for national efforts benefiting families. The body of human rights instruments compelled Governments to protect families and their individual members. The outcomes of major conferences acknowledged the role of families and addressed areas of special concern. General Assembly resolutions and Secretary-General's reports submitted in response to them focused on challenges and opportunities faced by families and recommended specific actions to make the family both a participant and a beneficiary of development efforts.

6. Although the international community shares a global concern over the future of the family and its role in development, a long-term plan of action for families, like those for youth or older persons, has not been developed. This has been partly because of the lack of consensus on the definition of the family and other family-

sensitive considerations in the development and implementation of family-oriented policies.

7. The recent Millennium Development Summit outcome document (General Assembly resolution 65/1) does not mention the family, except in the context of family planning. Yet, the majority of the Millennium Development targets, especially those relating to the reduction of poverty, education of children and reduction in maternal mortality, are difficult to attain unless the strategies to achieve them focus on the family.

8. Although there is no explicit family framework at the international level, many Governments recognize families as agents of development and actively pursue family-oriented social policies at the national level. In fact, over the years specific family-friendly policies have gained ground. Among them, non-contributory social transfer programmes, including conditional cash transfers, targeting mostly poor families, have become a core element of poverty reduction strategies in many developing countries. Such interventions have been credited with a reduction in the intergenerational transmission of poverty and better educational and health outcomes for children. These positive outcomes led to the growing popularity of similar programmes and demonstrated the value of focusing on family-centred policies to achieve development goals.

9. Notwithstanding national efforts, at the international level the family is appreciated but not prioritized in development efforts. The very contribution of families to the achievement of development goals continues to be largely overlooked, while there seems to be a consensus on the fact that, so far, the stability and cohesiveness of communities and societies largely rest on the strength of the family.

10. In effect, the very achievement of development goals depends on how well families are empowered to contribute to the achievement of those goals. Thus, policies focusing on improving the well-being of families are certain to benefit development. Such policies should not only help families to cope with their numerous responsibilities and shelter them from vulnerability; they should aim at supporting a variety of family functions rather than replacing them and treating families as collections of individuals, who independently need support.

11. The upcoming anniversary of the International Year of the Family offers an opportunity to add a family focus to development efforts with the objective of strengthening them as agents of development for the benefit of the society at large.

12. The present report focuses on four areas of relevance to the family noted by the General Assembly in resolution 64/133: confronting family poverty; promoting intergenerational solidarity; reconciling work and family life; and collecting national and regional data on family well-being. The report further addresses those issues in the context of the three objectives of the World Summit for Social Development — poverty eradication, employment and decent work and social integration — as a basis for the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

13. The report also provides a concise overview of family-related provisions from major human rights instruments and outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits and puts forward a draft framework for the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family. Proposed suggestions include activities at international, regional and national levels to raise

awareness of the role of the family in development and support families in performing their societal and developmental functions.

# II. Follow-up to the International Year of the Family

**Issues and policy responses**

14. Recent discussions on issues affecting families tend to centre on confronting family poverty, supporting intergenerational solidarity and reconciling work and family life. In turn, policy responses to those issues involve family-focused social policies, such as social protection mechanisms; specific programmes to address intergenerational relations and measures to assist families with children in balancing their work and family life. The collection of reliable data on family well-being to inform results-based policymaking is also a subject of increased attention by policymakers and practitioners. A brief overview of the importance of focusing on these issues and examples of policy responses relating to them follows.

## A. Confronting family poverty

15. In its resolution 64/133, the General Assembly encouraged Member States to adopt holistic approaches to policies and programmes confronting family poverty and social exclusion. The Assembly noted the importance of family-oriented and gender- and child-sensitive social protection policies in addressing family poverty and reducing the vulnerability of younger and older generations. Such policies have been increasingly mainstreamed in the overall development efforts.

16. Family-focused social transfer programmes in developing countries link cash transfers with basic service provisions. Brazil's Bolsa Família and Mexico's Oportunidades offer income supplements to families living in poverty provided that they send their children to school and ensure health check-ups. Other programmes provide income benefits for households working in local infrastructure development. Paid employment is guaranteed by the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India and through the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia. Chile Solidario is an integrated anti-poverty programme where cash transfers are combined with interventions in employment, health, education and housing.

17. Conditional cash transfers target families living in poverty. They differ in the coverage, programme design and context in which they operate. They range in coverage from 11 million families in Brazil to 215,000 in Chile, to pilot programmes with a few thousand families in Kenya and Nicaragua. They cover 40 per cent of the population in Ecuador, about 20 per cent in Brazil and Mexico and just 1 per cent of the population in Cambodia. In terms of expenditure, the costs range from about 0.50 per cent of GDP in Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico to 0.08 per cent of GDP in Chile. The level of the benefit varies from 20 per cent of mean household consumption in Mexico to 4 per cent in Honduras, and lower amounts for programmes in Bangladesh, Cambodia and Pakistan.[1]

[1] A. Fiszbein and N. Schady, *Conditional Cash Transfers: Reducing Present and Future Poverty* (World Bank, 2009).

18. All programmes seek to reduce poverty and vulnerability. Beneficiaries are mostly in poor or the poorest households with children. Focus on children aims at halting the intergenerational transfer of poverty, keeping them in school and reducing child labour.

19. Research demonstrates that family-oriented social protection programmes proved to be effective in shielding families from the negative effects of economic shocks, reducing their vulnerabilities and preventing them from slipping further into poverty.[2] The programmes improve nutrition, access to health and the overall health status of beneficiaries. Social protection schemes targeting families also allow them to make proper investments in their children's education helping to prevent intergenerational transfer of poverty. Conditional cash transfers improve school attendance and performance. According to the independent expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, "While cash transfers enable families to absorb the costs associated with schooling, other programmes, such as school feeding programmes or initiatives that provide fee waivers or subsidies for low-income families with children, also appear to be associated with higher school attendance levels" (A/65/259, para. 25). Research also shows that family access to social protection benefits like unemployment and disability benefits reduces child labour.[3] Findings from Colombia's Familias en Acción, Peru's Juntos, Chile's Chile Solidario, Nicaragua's Red de Protección Social, Mexico's Oportunidades, and South Africa's Old Age and Disability Grant confirm that social transfers have an important role in improving preventive health practices for the benefit of mothers and infants.

20. Cash and in kind transfers may help families and individuals to protect their productive assets or invest in such assets and establish income-generating activities (see A/65/259, para. 18). However, the resulting improvement in the lives of the recipients is often limited and rarely provides a pathway out of poverty.

21. Many social protection programmes are gender-sensitive, recognizing the role of women in care provision. At the same time, efforts should be made to avoid stereotyping and discrimination and promote the value of all types of work, including home care for both men and women. There is also a need for more programmes involving men to support and provide care for family members. It is equally important to ensure that programmes are designed to address unequal decision-making powers within families.

22. The effective delivery of social transfer programmes is predicated on an efficient administrative structure and an adequate financial capacity. Middle-income countries are mostly able to carry out such programmes to scale. Most low-income countries lack such capacity: programmes are implemented on a limited scale and/or remain at the pilot stage and often require sustained support from external donors. Moreover, to ensure their sustainability, social transfer programmes should be backed by sound macroeconomic and fiscal policies. Their success will also depend on the adequate provision of basic social services, especially for the most vulnerable families and individuals.

[2] "Effects of non-contributory social transfers in developing countries: A compendium". Working paper (ILO, May 2010).

[3] A. Cigno, F. C. Rosati and Z. Tzannatos, *Child Labour Handbook*, Social Protection Discussion Paper Series No. 0206 (World Bank, 2002).

## B. Promoting intergenerational solidarity

23. Intergenerational solidarity mostly relates to reciprocal care, support and exchange of material and non-material resources between family members, typically younger and older generations. The demographic transition, changes in family structures and living arrangements as well as migration often negatively impact intergenerational relations and solidarity.

24. Multigenerational families, with strong ties based on intergenerational support and reliance, although still common in many parts of the world, are rapidly declining in numbers. Families are becoming smaller and more diverse, many young people postpone marriage, more stay single or divorce, and many live longer with their parents. All those developments pose new demands on family members and test the traditional grandparent-parent-youth relationships. Such trends, combined with the fact that many countries are ill-equipped to address their effects, also indicate that intergenerational dependence between the younger and older family members may grow stronger.

25. Young people need special support in their transition to adulthood. For many, it is increasingly difficult to find gainful employment, afford independent housing and start their own families. Patterns of leaving parental homes are also evolving and are affected by changing structures of the labour and housing markets, changing patterns of family formation and expansion in education and training opportunities. Young people need affordable housing allowing them geographical mobility to respond to education, training and employment opportunities. Lack of affordable housing and limited prospects for income-generating activities may also force young people to forgo their educational and training opportunities and prolong their stay in the parental home. Transition to responsible adulthood may be postponed and reliance on the older generation, especially in terms of housing provision and income-support, increases.

26. According to survey research in developed and developing countries, despite social and economic changes, family bonds remain strong and family members assist one another through financial support and care. In both developed and developing countries, older people, especially the younger-old, are more likely to provide financial support to younger family members than they are to receive it, even though there may be a perception that younger generations are faced with the burden of taking care of the older ones (see A/65/157, paras. 48 and 49). The Survey on Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) reports that over half of grandmothers and nearly half of grandfathers — 58 and 49 per cent, respectively — provided some care for a grandchild on a regular basis. In southern Europe, where co-residence is more prevalent, grandparents provide the greatest amount of care to their grandchildren. On the other hand, research also demonstrates that fewer and fewer parents expect their children to take care of them in their old age.

27. Social protection schemes have been found to promote intergenerational solidarity. Examples from South Africa and Namibia show that grandparents use their non-contributory social pensions to cover their grandchildren's school fees.[4] Evidence from social pension schemes in Lesotho and Namibia indicates that

[4] Stephen Devereux, *Social Pensions in Namibia and South Africa* (Institute of Development Studies Discussion Paper 379 (February 2001)).

elderly people have improved their financial self-reliance and hence their status within the household. Social pensions can thus play an important role in restoring dignity and conferring recognition to elderly people.[5]

28. Community programmes and the promotion of intergenerational communication at work are good steps towards better intergenerational relations. Policies aimed at reconciling work and family life and eliminating age-related barriers in the workplace may also contribute to improved intergenerational relations at the family, community and society levels.

29. Examples from several countries of concrete measures aimed at strengthening intergenerational solidarity include the training of younger employees by experienced workers and the assurance of young peoples' participation in poverty eradication, employment creation and social integration programmes. In Australia, intergenerational exchange programmes have been found to help younger and older persons to build very concrete, and often highly specialized, skills, find work and expand career opportunities. Benefits to the broader community include the building, maintenance and revitalization of public infrastructure.[6]

30. School-based intergenerational programmes involve obligatory community service, requiring young people, typically high school students, to help older persons in their day-to-day activities. They can also include mentoring programmes, where older persons volunteer to help children and young people with their schoolwork. The initial analysis of 133 intergenerational programmes in Spain found that, on an individual level, these programmes appear to improve self-confidence, self-esteem and perceived health, facilitating greater community integration and involvement.[7]

31. Some programmes recognize that intergenerational approaches effectively address many priorities, such as: the building of active communities; the promotion of citizenship; and the regeneration of neighbourhoods as well as addressing inequality and social exclusion. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the Manchester Generations Together programme, launched in 2009, connects people across generations to build understanding and respect. The programme challenges public agencies, businesses and communities to enable older persons' participation in the plans for the regeneration of the city. One of its projects develops skills sharing through a school volunteering programme, and another helps younger and older people to start social and non-profit enterprises together.[8]

32. In some countries, family-oriented support includes cash benefits for family members who care for older family members. The "cash and counselling" programme run by Medicaid in the United States of America pays seniors directly to cover their in-home care. Cash can then be transferred to the family members who care for them. In South Africa, support is given to older caregivers, especially those

[5] International Labour Organization, "Effects of non-contributory social transfers in developing countries: A compendium". Working paper (May 2010), p. x.

[6] J. MacCallum and others, "Community Building through Intergenerational Exchange Programs: Report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme" (Canberra, 2006).

[7] Mariano Sanchez and others, "Intergenerational programmes: towards a society for all ages" (Social Studies Collection No. 23, 2007).

[8] Family Platform Online Journal, vol. 2: Solidarities in Contemporary Families. Available from http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/home/publications/journal-volume-2-solidarities-in-contemporary-families.

caring for children and youth with HIV/AIDS. These types of programmes help families to overcome the burden of care and strengthen family ties. It should be noted, however, that the evaluation of intergenerational programmes has been mostly qualitative, incorporating interviews and focus groups, with limited quantitative evaluation of their effectiveness having been undertaken so far.

## C. Reconciling work and family life

33. Equality and equity in opportunities, access to resources and equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women as well as respect for the rights of all family members are essential for both the well-being of the family and that of the society at large.

34. Families find it more and more difficult to reconcile the competing necessities of their work and family obligations. The burden of care quasi-universally placed on women tends to significantly limit their access to employment and social participation. Whereas, today, both women and men are engaged in gainful employment, the domestic workload still remains the responsibility of women for the most part, a fact that remains largely unaddressed in the context of both legal and social policy frameworks. Comprehensive legal and policy frameworks balancing work and family life should be established to allow for shared care responsibilities between men and women, other family members, the State, the private sector and society as a whole.

35. Policy interventions aimed at facilitating better balancing of work and family life range from parental leave to child benefits and access to affordable childcare. However, most measures are accessible only to women employed in the formal sector, excluding all those working in informal jobs. Also, even when provisions exist, experience shows that they may not be implemented.

36. An assessment of parental leave policies in 21 developed countries indicates that total protected job leave available to couples varies widely from 14 weeks in Switzerland to over 300 weeks in France and Spain. Most countries provide between three months and one year of full-time equivalent paid leave. The review noted that the Nordic countries of Finland, Norway and Sweden offered the best policies in terms of both generosity and gender equality outcomes.[9]

37. In the European Union, work-life balance policies often focus on the increased female labour market participation and a more egalitarian division of labour at home. The provision of quality childcare is considered a preferred policy option to help parents to reconcile work and family life. At the Barcelona Summit in 2002, the European Council set concrete targets of providing childcare by 2010 to at least 90 per cent of children between 3 years of age and the mandatory school age and at least 33 per cent of children under 3 years of age. Eurostat data indicate that the use of formal childcare arrangements varies from 73 per cent in Denmark to 2 per cent in the Czech Republic and Poland, and 7 States members of the European Union (EU) have already met the Barcelona targets. It is expected that childcare will

[9] R. Ray, J. C. Gornick and J. Smitt, "Parental Leave Policies in 21 Countries: assessing Generosity and Gender Equality", Center for Economic and Policy Research (Washington, D.C., September 2008).

remain central to social care policy in EU since it is related to the needs of the economy, the labour market and gender equality policy.

38. While specific policies provide incentives towards changing the perception that men's work is worth more than women's and that caring is the sole responsibility of women, stereotypes remain entrenched and much more needs to be done. Society should recognize the equal value of both types of work and strengthen families to fulfil this role. Such transformation would ensure that caregiving responsibility is shared between men and women with society at large, including the responsibility of the State and markets.[10] In essence, both men and women have a right to paid employment without being forced to neglect their family responsibilities.

39. Yet, behaviour and perception are slowly changing. Fathers are no longer solely regarded as breadwinners but increasingly as full partners in co-parenting. These new expectations are, inter alia, due to the rise in women's professional and educational status and the corresponding increase in the importance of their earnings and new demands on their professional careers. In response to these trends, new "father-sensitive" policies, such as statutory paternal leave and flexible working provisions, facilitating the increased role of men in caregiving, have been adopted in several countries, particularly in Europe. Findings show that fathers are most likely to take paternity leave when it is longer than 14 days and offers income replacement of 50 per cent or more.[11]

## D. Collecting national and regional data on family well-being

40. Evidence-based policymaking rests on the availability of reliable data on family well-being. Data illustrating the situation of families and challenges they face are needed to inform and stimulate a debate over explicit family policy and its impact as well as to identify the most vulnerable families in need of immediate assistance.

41. The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development has recently launched a Global State of the Family Index.[12] The database includes indicators of family well-being such as infant and maternal mortality, marriage and divorce, educational attainment and other quantitative indicators relevant to the family. The data can be mapped geographically by countries, with timeline tables available to compare the indicators in different countries and regions over time. The database also allows for animation of many indicators, making for a better illustration of trends.

42. The Research Division of the European Commission has carried out a Family Platform project. The project has critically reviewed existing research on the family in Europe. The final report of this project, to conclude in 2011, will serve as the research agenda and basis for the European Union family policies road map 2012-2013 and will address issues such as: gender equality at work and at home,

[10] International Labour Organization and United Nations Development Programme, "Work and Family: towards new forms of reconciliation with social co-responsibility" (2009).

[11] Margaret O'Brien, "Fathers, Parental Leave Policies and Infant Quality of Life", International Perspectives and Policy Impact", The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (2009), vol. 624, No. 1, pp. 190-213.

[12] Available from http://globalfamilyindex.org.qa/.

reconciliation of work and family life, care of family members over the life course, intergenerational solidarity, and immigrant families and their integration in host countries. The project aims to answer the question of how European policies and the States members of EU can improve the well-being of families in the long term.[13]

43. One of the major conclusions of the research carried out so far is that family policy in Europe should focus on the rising number of lone-parent families who are most at risk of poverty. Another area of concern is the fact that women continue to assume a remarkably bigger share of domestic work even in dual-earner families, and the division of paid and especially unpaid work continues to be gendered and particularly resistant to policy interventions. Even though EU policy is "father-sensitive", encouraging men's caring role and fatherhood, a division of gender roles prevails with women providing the bulk of domestic work. Current research also demonstrates the new role of grandparents in financial support of their children and caring for their grandchildren.[14]

## III. Preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

### A. Review of family-related provisions of human rights instruments and outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits

44. International focus on the family stems from the mandate of the International Year of the Family observed in 1994. One of the objectives of the Year is to build upon the results of international activities concerning individual family members as well as other major events of concern to the family or its individual members.

45. In addition, numerous General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 64/133 on the follow-up to the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and beyond, noted that "the family-related provisions of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s and their follow-up processes continue to provide policy guidance on ways to strengthen family-centred components of policies and programmes as part of an integrated comprehensive approach to development". The review below highlights the most important issues pertaining to family as contained in those frameworks.

#### 1. Human rights instruments

46. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms in article 16 that the family, as the fundamental group unit of society, is entitled to protection by society and the State (General Assembly resolution 217 A (III)). This is echoed by article 10 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and article 23 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (General Assembly resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex). Human rights law upholds the right of people to marry and form a family, and the right of children to a family. As the family can be vulnerable to social, economic and political pressure, human rights law also seeks to

[13] See http://www.familyplatform.eu/en/home.

[14] Family Platform, "Research on Families and Family Policies in Europe: State of the Art". Final report 15 September 2010.

support the family by stipulating State obligations to keep families together and reunify them in case of separation.

47. Gender equality and the importance of ensuring work and family balance is the focus of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Convention is especially relevant when it comes to discrimination and unequal treatment of women and their status in the family, setting provisions for equal rights and responsibilities within a family. Enabling parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life is also emphasized (General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex, articles 5, 11 and 16).

48. Human rights instruments also lay down standards for the treatment of children lacking parental care and oblige States to provide for foster care or adoption. Equal rights and responsibilities of men and women at marriage, during the marriage and at its dissolution are also upheld, as are the rights of children to parental care and being free from abuse. The Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that the family, as the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community (General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex, fifth preambular paragraph). Parents have the most important role in the bringing up of children and are encouraged to deal with rights issues with their children "in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child" (ibid., article 5). The Convention addresses children's rights from a child's perspective and urges adherence to the best interest of the child, focusing on survival and developmental, protection and participation rights.

49. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities stipulates that persons with disabilities and their family members should receive the necessary protection and assistance to enable families to contribute towards the full and equal enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities (General Assembly resolution 61/106, annex I, preambular paragraph (x)).

50. In the context of human rights, it is important to acknowledge that there are still families, as there are individuals and communities, that enforce customs endangering the situation of women, perpetrate violence against women and children, and seek to dominate those who are weaker and defenceless. Older family members as well as those with disabilities may fall victim to neglect and abuse within their own families as well. That is why the authority of the family is limited by the human rights of its individual members.

### 2. Major United Nations conferences, summits and instruments

51. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994 contains family-relevant policy recommendations in the areas of housing, work, health, social security and education, including parenting. The Programme of Action also notes that it is important to develop the capacity to monitor the impact of social and economic decisions and actions on the well-being of families, on the status of women within families, and on the ability of families to meet the basic needs of their members. Families in vulnerable situations are in need of particular assistance. Such families include single-parent families headed by women, refugee and displaced families, those where family members are affected by HIV/AIDS, substance dependence, child abuse and domestic violence as well as

families living in poverty, families affected by war, drought, natural disasters, discrimination or violence. Governments are encouraged to support and develop appropriate mechanisms to assist families caring for children, their older members and family members with disabilities and support the viability of multigenerational families.[15]

52. The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, adopted by the General Assembly in 1995, emphasizes the increasing difficulty for young people to receive family life education as a basis for forming healthy families that foster sharing of responsibilities (resolution 50/81, annex, para. 6 (f)). It also notes that youth unemployment deprives young people of the opportunity to secure independent housing necessary to establish families (ibid., para. 34). The Supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond observes that trends in globalization and development have resulted in situations where many young people are cut off from their families (General Assembly resolution 62/126, annex, para. 54). It also calls for programmes to strengthen families and to foster intergenerational relations (ibid., para. 58).

53. Women's role in families is underscored by the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995, which noted that women's literacy was an important key to improving health, nutrition and education in the family and to empowering women to participate in decision-making in society.[16] Reconciling work and family responsibilities takes up a large share of recommendations on family well-being, e.g., policies should facilitate the restructuring of work patterns to promote the sharing of family responsibilities and promote career development based on work conditions that harmonize work and family responsibilities.

54. The Habitat Agenda adopted at the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), held in Istanbul in 1996, commits Governments to encouraging social and economic policies "designed to meet the housing needs of families and their individual members, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members, with particular attention to the care of children."[17]

55. The World Summit for Social Development, 1995, recognized the family as the basic unit of society and acknowledged its key role in social development. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development acknowledged that the family should be strengthened, with attention to the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of its members. It also noted that the family is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support and that "in different cultural, political and social systems various forms of family exist".[18] Member States also commit themselves to provide the family with an environment that ensures its protection and support.[19]

56. The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development recognizes the critical contribution of families to social integration. Mutual respect, tolerance and cooperation, as well as equal partnership between women and men in the family, are critical to the respect of these values in the society at large. It is,

[15] A/CONF.171/13/Rev.1, paras. 5.9, 5.7, 5.12 and 5.11.
[16] A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1, para. 69.
[17] A/CONF.165/14, para. 40 (k).
[18] A/CONF.166/9, para. 26 (h).
[19] Ibid., Commitment 4 (k).

therefore, important to ensure opportunities for family members to understand and meet their social responsibilities within the family and within society. Consequently, social and economic policies should be designed with a view to meeting the needs of families and their individual members, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable members, with particular attention to the care of children.[20]

57. At its twenty-fourth special session, which marked the fifth anniversary of the World Summit on Social Development, the General Assembly further observed that "greater attention should be paid to helping the family in its supporting, educating and nurturing roles, to the causes and consequences of family disintegration, and to the adoption of measures to reconcile work and family life for women and men" (General Assembly resolution S/24/2, para. 56). It also recognized the importance of promoting appropriate action to meet the needs of families, especially in the areas of economic support and provision of social services.

58. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, noted that families were important to promote reciprocity, intergenerational solidarity and interdependence. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring conditions that enabled families to provide care and protection to persons as they age through family-friendly and gender-sensitive policies aimed at reconciling work and caregiving responsibilities. The Plan of Action also expressed a growing concern that a lack of family-friendly policy regarding the organization of work could increase difficulties relating to family care obligations and the ability of women to build pensions and other resources for their retirement.[21]

59. In addition to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, it is also pertinent to note the International Labour Organization's instruments recognizing workers with families. Its Convention on Workers with Family Responsibilities argues that the absence of effective measures for reconciling work and family responsibilities compromised development. It also called upon States to create national policies that enable workers with families to engage in employment without risking discrimination and take measures to develop or promote community services, public or private, such as childcare and family services and facilities, thus enabling parents to engage in employment.[22] The Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families requires States Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure the protection of the unity of the families of migrant workers and facilitate their reunification (General Assembly resolution 45/158, article 44).

60. This brief overview demonstrates that the concern over the well-being of families is a tangible element of the outcomes of major conferences and summits. The international community clearly recognizes that, as a basic unit of society, the family plays a key role in social development and deserves protection and assistance to fulfil its multiple roles. Existing instruments do provide a series of guidelines on the types of policies needed to empower families.

[20] Ibid., para. 81.

[21] A/CONF.197/9, paras. 28 (i) and 25.

[22] International Labour Organization Convention No. 156, Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981, articles 4 and 5.

### 3. General Assembly resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General on the family

61. The General Assembly resolutions focusing on the family since the proclamation of the International Year of the Family in 1989 have dealt with a wide range of issues relevant to the well-being of families around the world. Governments were encouraged to mainstream family policy into their overall policymaking, build on the provisions of family-related international activities, and take special measures to increase the well-being of families.

62. Similarly, the Secretary-General's reports guided national, regional and international efforts for the implementation of those resolutions. Most recently the attention of the international community focused on some specific aspects of family policy, including integrating a family perspective into the promotion of social protection and investing in intergenerational solidarity within families and communities. Further exploration of these issues and their interconnectedness is warranted, especially now, when the effects of the current economic crisis point to the relevance of social protection and intergenerational solidarity as coping strategies.

## B. Proposed framework for the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

63. The General Assembly, in its resolution 59/111 of 6 December 2004, decided to celebrate the anniversary of the International Year of the Family on a 10-year basis. Thus the international community can take stock of family issues at regular intervals and keep the focus on the family on the international agenda.

64. On the basis of the overall objectives of the International Year of the Family, family-oriented components of the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits highlighted above, as well as general guidance provided by the General Assembly resolutions focusing on the family and the reports of the Secretary-General in response to those resolutions, a framework for the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary emerges.

### 1. Objectives of the International Year of the Family, 1994

65. The overall objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up process continue to guide national and international efforts to benefit families worldwide: increasing awareness of family issues among Governments and the private sector; strengthening the capacity of national institutions in family policymaking; stimulating efforts to respond to problems affecting families; undertaking reviews and assessments of the situation and needs of families; enhancing effectiveness of current and new programmes; improving collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations in support of families; and building upon the results of international activities of concern to the family or its individual members.

66. Raising awareness of family issues will continue to be a major priority for the years to come. It may involve efforts to highlight the importance of family functions, such as socialization of children and caring for young and old family members, as well as the role of families in development and their contribution to building socially integrated societies.

67. Strengthening the national institutional capacity to design, implement, monitor and assess comprehensive and coherent family policies encompasses both the training of policymakers and practitioners and the creation and development of dedicated administrative units within relevant ministries. Sharing of experiences among countries in this area will be very beneficial.

68. Scaling up efforts in response to specific problems affecting families may entail providing better access to education, health services and housing, especially for families in vulnerable situations. Innovative ways of responding to the needs of families could be showcased and good practices shared.

69. Strengthening partnership with civil society organizations is critical to both securing a family perspective in policymaking and programme implementation as well as raising awareness of family issues.

70. National policymaking should be continually guided by duties and obligations pledged at the international forum. All these major objectives remain valid and should continue to guide the national, regional and international preparations for the twentieth anniversary.

### 2. Tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

71. The preparations for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004 focused on the approaches to family policy development; technology and its impact on the family; parental roles and intrafamilial support systems; statistics and indicators for family well-being and HIV/AIDS and its impact on families. Those issues were discussed at several meetings leading to the tenth anniversary, and were the subject of several publications prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat.

72. For the twentieth anniversary it would be advisable to continue focusing on family policy development and sharing of experiences and information.

### 3. Proposed themes for the twentieth anniversary

73. The importance of the family in social development deserves to be placed high on the agenda of the Commission for Social Development, especially as it relates to the achievement of the three pillars of the Copenhagen Conference: reduction of poverty, full employment and decent work and social integration. To that end the following major themes — the importance of which was highlighted in section II of the report — are proposed to guide the preparations for the observance of the twentieth anniversary:

(a) Confronting family poverty and social exclusion;

(b) Ensuring work-family balance;

(c) Advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity within families and the communities.

## C. Preparations at the international level

74. The annual observance of the International Day of Families helps to raise awareness of family issues and stimulate efforts to respond to challenges faced by

families. The 2010 observance focused on "The impact of migration on families around the world". It was particularly relevant to the plight of migrant families facing prolonged separation, economic hardship and discrimination in the countries of destination.

75. The observances of the International Day of Families from 2011 to 2013 could centre on the themes established for the twentieth anniversary as follows: 2011: Confronting family poverty and social exclusion; 2012: Ensuring work and family balance; and 2013: Advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity. The celebration of the International Day of Families in May 2014 will address the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and focus on progress and challenges ahead.

76. The upcoming sessions of the Commission for Social Development and family-focused side events will offer an opportunity to raise awareness of family issues, assess family policies and highlight the activities for the twentieth anniversary. Governments will also be asked to share good practices in promoting the well-being of families in the three areas noted above and showcase their national efforts to implement family-focused policies and programmes. Depending on the support of Member States, an observance commemorating the twentieth anniversary could be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in the autumn of 2014.

## D. Preparations at the regional level

77. The upcoming anniversary of the International Year of the Family presents an opportunity to draw attention to challenges faced by families in different parts of the world. Appropriate preparations at regional and subregional levels would help to assess and review the situation of families in the regions, encourage greater efforts at regional data collection and stimulate an exchange of good practices in family policymaking.

78. Accordingly, it would be advisable to hold regional meetings focusing on the themes for the twentieth anniversary. Such regional gatherings could review the progress towards the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and draw attention to the issues of concern to the regions. The meetings would be attended by various stakeholders, including Government representatives, policymakers, United Nations agencies and bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, research and academic institutions and the private sector.

79. With the support of Member States, regional partners and non-governmental organizations as well as academic institutions, regional meetings could be convened under their sponsorship. The United Nations Programme on the Family stands ready to assist in the preparations for regional meetings and dissemination of their findings and recommendations.

80. Each regional meeting would focus on the themes for the twentieth anniversary and issues of concern to the region. Specific policies, programmes and good practices would be showcased. At the conclusion of each meeting, a report summarizing the findings, highlighting policies supporting the well-being of families and making recommendations on the best ways to further advance it will be

published. Possible ways of strengthening regional and international cooperation could also be discussed.

81. In 2014 an international conference may be convened to present the findings and recommendations from regional meetings. The final recommendations of the conference could be used to guide efforts of the international community to strengthen families and ensure that they are the focus of development efforts in the years to come.

### E. Preparations at the national level

82. Governments will be encouraged to plan, coordinate and carry out activities in support of the overall objectives of the International Year of the Family and the priority themes of the twentieth anniversary.

83. Member States will be urged to develop appropriate policies to address family poverty and social exclusion, especially in families in the most vulnerable situations. Work-family balance policies, already high on the agenda of many Governments and international organizations, require closer scrutiny as to what policies are effective and where improvements should be made. The impact of family dynamics on social integration may be the most challenging issue to address and groundwork may have to be undertaken here.

84. Governments will be encouraged to review and assess their family policies as well as all policies that have a direct bearing on the well-being of families. Challenges faced in family policy design, implementation and monitoring and ways to overcome them should also be noted and lessons learned shared.

## IV. Conclusions and recommendations

85. The upcoming twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family obliges Member States to review the international commitments to the family expressed in human rights instruments and outcomes of major conferences and summits. It offers an unprecedented opportunity to place the family high on the development agenda and recognize that families should be a focus of social policy for the sake of present and future generations.

86. As recognized by the General Assembly in numerous resolutions, the family-oriented provisions of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the 1990s as well as their follow-up processes offer policy guidance on ways to strengthen family-centred components of family policies and programmes. Moreover, the outcomes of those conferences provide a framework for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and guide international efforts for their achievement.

87. The twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family, coming on the eve of the target year of the Millennium Development Goals, gives us an opportunity to refocus on the role of families in development. The success of these endeavours will depend on the commitment of Member States to support the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up process.

88. The overall objectives of the twentieth anniversary need to focus on how best to support families in their functions, share good practices on family policies, review challenges faced by families and recommend solutions. Tangible support for families on the part of the international community demonstrates its commitment to the goals of social development, including social cohesion and solidarity between generations.

89. The following recommendations are proposed for consideration by the Commission for Social Development:

(a) The Commission could review the proposals contained in the present report on the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family and recommend appropriate actions to be undertaken to that effect at the national, regional and international levels;

(b) The Commission may consider supporting the following major themes to guide the preparations for the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in line with the three pillars of the Copenhagen Conference:

(i) Poverty eradication: confronting family poverty and social exclusion;

(ii) Full employment and decent work: ensuring work-family balance;

(iii) Social integration: advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity within families and communities;

(c) The Commission may consider requesting Governments to report on their national activities in support of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family;

(d) Governments, United Nations agencies and bodies, civil society organizations and academic institutions should share good practices and data in the area of family-oriented policy development, implementation and monitoring and family well-being;

(e) Governments, United Nations agencies and bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, research and academic institutions and the private sector should be encouraged to play a supportive role in promoting the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its twentieth anniversary.